

The Magazine For Prince & Fans And Collectors

# UPTOWN

Spring 1995 • #17

## AIN'T THAT A BITCH!

— The Story of the *Black Album*

## A SONG 4 U

— Prince's Songs for Other Artists

## STANDING AT THE ALTAR

— Exclusive Interview with Margie Cox

CANADA \$6.95





# #17

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# Editorial

**UPTOWN** — the independent magazine for Prince & fans and collectors — is published quarterly (January, April, July, October). In addition to these issues, a fifth special issue is published yearly.

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# NEWS Crucial

**Tour plans...** A 1995 world tour is in the planning. It seems likely that the tour will begin in Europe. The following dates were announced when we went to press: London (3, 4, 5, 7, 8 March), Manchester (10 March), Glasgow (13, 14 March), Sheffield (16 March), Birmingham (18, 19 March), Dublin (28, 29 March). In addition, a concert at the Marquee in London is planned for February 27th.

**Black Album release...** The notorious *Black Album* was released on November 22nd on cassette and CD. Approximately 1,000 copies of vinyl promo LPs were pressed. In the UK, the album was released on November 21st on cassette and CD, and an official vinyl version was made available on November 28th. No singles from the album will be released, but an "all black" video for "When 2 R In Love" has been put together, featuring only the lyrics to the song.

In their tongue-in-cheek advertisement for the album, Warner Bros. made an "amnesty offer" for bootleg owners: the first 1,000 people who send in their bootleg copies of the album will receive new copies of the album. Warner employees in Burbank honoured the release date by dressing in black and cutting the lights for a 15-minute "blackout."

**The Gold Experience**  
Do U Want 2 See It Liberated From Warner Bros. Records?

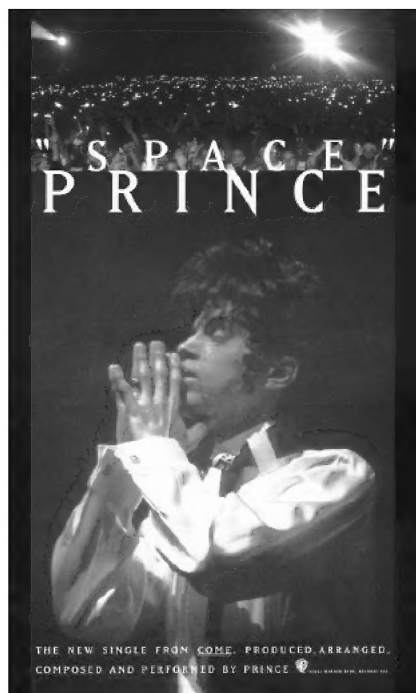
Pussy Control  
Endorphinemachine  
Shhh!  
We March  
Days Of Wild  
The Most Beautiful Girl In The World  
Dolphin  
Now  
319  
Shy  
Billy Jack Bitch  
Eye Hate U  
Gold

Vote YES ☒ and send your response to:  
Warner Bros. Records  
3300 Warner Blvd.  
Burbank, CA 91502

**Release Date:**  
NEVER!

**The Gold Experience...** The N.P.G. store has been passing out flyers with a new track listing of *The Gold Experience* album, with the release date "never," asking fans to continue to petition Warner Bros. requesting the album's release, "Do U Want 2 See It Liberated from Warner Bros. Records?" They have also mailed messages on the Internet. The new track listing is: "Pussy Control" / "Endorphinemachine" / "Shhh!" / "We March" / "Days Of Wild" / "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World" / "Dolphin" / "Now" / "319" / "Shy" / "Billy Jack Bitch" / "Eye Hate U" / "Gold."

**"Letitgo" maxi-single...** The U.S. maxi-single release of "Letitgo" features seven versions of the song plus the album version: "Caviar Radio Edit" "Cavi" Street Edit," "Instrumental," "On The Cool-Out Tip Radio Edit," "Sherm Stick Edit," "(-) Sherm Stick Edit," "Original Radio Edit," and "Original Album Version." The European version of this maxi-single has six tracks: the above minus "Sherm Stick Edit" and "Original Radio Edit."



**"Space"...** The second single from the *Come* album was "Space," released on November 1st in the States (October 31st in the UK). The A-side is a new version of the song, with different lyrics, while the B-side is the album version. The song didn't enter the *Billboard* Pop chart and reached only number 71 on the R&B chart. No chart impact in England.

The maxi-single release of "Space" features four remixes of the song besides the album version: "Universal Love Remix," "Funky Stuff Remix," "Funky Stuff Dub," "Acoustic Remix," and the album version.

Shank You Mavis Staple George Clinton N.P.G. The Steeles Mayte Margie Cox Madhouse Nona Gaye

for making

**1-800-NEW-FUNK**

a tremendous success

**OVER 500,000 UNITS SOLD INTERNATIONALLY!**


Stay Tuned For The Next Single from 1-800-New-Funk "Standing at the Altar" By Margie Cox

**N.P.G.**

Agencies Courtesy of Warner Bros. Records  
Manufactured, Marketed and Promoted by Inland Records, Hollywood, California 90028

**Record sales...** N.P.G. Records has announced international sales of over 500,000 units for the *1-800-NEW-FUNK* album. The *Come* album has been certified gold in the States. Reportedly 700,000 units have been sold.

**N.P.G. album...** *The Exodus Has Begun* (possibly retitled *New Power Soul*), the N.P.G. album we reported on in *UPTOWN* #16, looks set to be a double CD. Edel is planning a release in Europe.

**"Get Wild"...** The track "Get Wild" appears on the soundtrack to Robert Altman's film. Although the film has been retitled *Ready To Wear*, the soundtrack album is called *Pret-A-Porter*. The song is credited to The New Power Generation for performance and writing, production by , published by N.P.G. Music. A video of the song has been shot.

During the last week of December, Minneapolis television's channel 9 broadcast a clip of the "Get Wild" fragrance commercial.

**Madhouse album...** A third Madhouse album, 24, has been completed for some time. It seems unlikely that Warner Bros. will release the album, and no other record company has yet picked up the album.

**Showgirls...** Shooting is completed on *Showgirls*, the new film by Paul Verhoeven, director of *Basic Instinct*. Prince has written music for the film and is reportedly going to be performing in it. Release is scheduled autumn of 1995.

**VH-1 launch party...** Prince flew to London to launch the Friday September 30th premiere broadcast of the music video channel VH-1. Prince attended the kick off party at the Roundhouse club in London. He was introduced by Tommy Vance, one of the VJs. Prince walked onstage and stood by a large remote control on a stand that had been brought on and watched the video countdown, pressing the button to premiere his "Dolphin" video. After the video had finished, he spotted his fans in the front and came over and shook some hands, then left the stage. He was later seen at Brown's nightclub. He also visited the N.P.G. store in the early hours of Saturday morning.

**Paisley Park parties...** Prince threw a small party at Paisley Park on October 14th where "Get Wild" and "Come" remixes were played from CD. There was no performance. Prince also gave the demo CD of "Get Wild" to the Minneapolis radio station KWW-FM.

Another party at Paisley Park was thrown on December 10th. "Billy Jack Bitch" and "Pussy Control" were played from CD.

**Glam Slam...** Since October 1994, Prince is no longer associated with Glam Slam in Minneapolis. He has removed all of his memorabilia, including his guitars, clothing and other items that were on display at the Glam Slam shop. The late-night "Erotic City" events are no more. Long-time friends Prince and Gilbert Davison, former President of Paisley Park Enterprises and now sole owner of Glam Slam, are no longer on good terms, and Prince is not welcome at the club.

**Video shoots...** In early November, Prince shot a video at Paisley Park for a song called "Same December." A video has also been shot for "18 And Over," featuring only Morris Hayes and Tommy Barbarella besides Prince.

**Mayte's birthday party...** On Saturday, November 12, Prince threw a 21st birthday party for Mayte at Paisley Park. A large cake was brought out for Mayte. Prince gave a short concert, performing amongst others Rick James' "You And I," Parliament's "Flashlight," "Pussy Control," "Race," "Mad," and a 10-minute rendition of "Happy Birthday."

**New songs...** The N.P.G. store has been playing three new songs in November and December: "Mad," "Funky Design," and "Snow Man." "Mad" is similar in style to "Now," while "Funky Design" is an attempt at a harder rap edge. "Snow Man" is a ballad sung by Nona Gaye.



**Live in Berlin...** Prince arrived in Berlin on November 22nd for the first ever *MTV European Music Awards*. Prince and his band stayed at the Hilton Hotel, in the former east part of Berlin. Most of the performers on the show stayed at this hotel. Prince's small crew of people, including publicist Karen Lee and Kirk Johnson, stayed at the Hotel Krone, a cheaper annex to the Hilton. Prince's arrival at the hotel was greeted by cheers from a crowd of Take That fans, who shouted at every car that stopped in front of the hotel. Prince did the "wild sign" to the crowd before entering the hotel. Brief clips from the airport and the hotel were shown by RTL television.

The first rehearsal on the MTV stage at the Brandenburg Gate took place the next day. Prince arrived around 12 o'clock and rehearsed for half an hour. They rehearsed "Peach" and worked on the instrumental intro which would be played during the awards show. They also played an instrumental version of "Race," with Prince jamming on his new golden portable keyboard (the "Goldaxxx"). A few horn samples from "Girls And Boys" were included in "Race."

Later in the evening, Prince and band members attended the Tränenpalast concert by Lyn Collins featuring Marva Whitney, previously backing singer with James Brown. Prince and his group sat in a closed upstairs section of the club. Prince left after 40 minutes, but not before booking the club for the next evening.

The final dress rehearsal was held the next day (November 24th). The entire awards show was rehearsed the way it would be performed later in the evening. Prince appeared at 5:20 pm and rehearsed the intro and "Peach."

To make Prince's entrance as impressive as possible, MTV hired 13 people to escort him onto the stage. They just took some guys from the local crew and some fans and dressed them up in black clothes. Prince's performance on the show was short but fairly energetic. He said "Peace to George Michael, peace to Aerosmith, peace to MTV, death to Prince," before ripping into "Peach." Mayte stagedived into the crowd, injuring her back. At the end of "Peach," Prince threw his black symbol guitar away.

Prince's aftershow was held at Tränenpalast ("Palace of Tears"), which is situated in the former East Berlin. Admission was DM50 and the doors opened 2 am, although the announcement said it would be at 11 pm. The show began at 2:50 am and lasted about two hours.

Michael Bland and Sonny Thompson entered the stage and began a loose and relaxed jam, somewhat like the "Get Up, Stand Up" opening at Les Bains Douches in Paris 1992. This gave the sound technicians (including Kirkly J. at the soundboard) an opportunity to get the sound right. A few minutes later, Prince strolled onto the stage, playing guitar. After 10 minutes of jamming on what sounded like an instrumental version of The Parliaments' "Mothership Connection," they left the stage. Apparently, Prince's microphone didn't work, so the technicians worked on this before the gig started all over, this time by a guitar solo followed by an abbreviated





ed version of "Endorphinemachine." Then they went into "The Ride," which was followed by "The Jam," "Shhh," and "Days Of Wild," the latter including a portion of "Hair."

Mayte brought 10 people on stage for "Now," which included "Babies Makin' Babies." After the song, a bodyguard asked everybody to leave the stage, and Prince continued with "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World." Next was "Pussy Control" followed by a jam on acoustic guitar. A cover version of "Proud Mary" closed the main set and Prince left the stage.

The encore started with a jam on the Goldaxxe, which went into "Race." Samples from "Girls And Boys" were included in the jam. Then came "Super Hero" with bits of "Out Of Space," a song by Billy Preston. After an organ solo, they went directly into "Dark," which included sampled snatches from "Letitgo." "Billy Jack Bitch" followed immediately after another organ solo. After a five-minute break, the final encore began with Prince on bass, playing a part of "777-9311" before going into "We March," which closed the set.

The set list was the following: Warm-up jam / "Endorphinemachine" / "The Ride" / "The Jam" / "Shhh" / "Days Of Wild" - "Hair" / "Now" / "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World" / "Pussy Control" / acoustic guitar jam / "Proud Mary" / "Race" - "Girls And Boys" / "Super Hero" - "Out Of Space" / organ solo #1 / "Dark" - "Letitgo" / organ solo #2 / "Billy Jack Bitch" / "777-9311" / "We March."

Prince and Mayte left for Paris in the afternoon (November 25th), staying there until November 27th when they flew back to Minneapolis.

**Live in New York...** Prince performed a 90-minute set at Roseland in New York on December 12th. The occasion was a cast party to benefit the Rivington House Village Center for Care following the premiere of Robert Altman's new film, *Ready To Wear*, formerly known as *Pret-A-Porter*, a title ("ready to wear" in French) which was thought unpronounceable for American audiences. The party was attended by celebrities such as Kim Basinger and husband Alec Baldwin, Sophia Loren, and Grace Jones. The party featured a fashion show in

keeping with the fashion theme of the film.

Prince arrived at Roseland at 6 pm for a soundcheck, then returned at 10 pm and hit the stage at midnight.

The set comprised: "Endorphinemachine" / "The Jam" / "Shhh" / "Days Of Wild" - "Hair" / "Now" - rap by the artist 99 - "Babies Makin' Babies" / "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World" / "Pussy Control" / "Letitgo" / "Pink Cashmere" / "Dolphin" - "The Ride" / "Race" / "Super Hero" / "Get Wild."

The show ended at 1:35 am. After the show, Prince's road crew were setting up equipment at Limelight, but the expected aftershow never materialized. Reportedly, Prince enjoyed a party at Kafka's in Soho so much that he decided not to perform.

**David Letterman...** The next day (December 13th), Prince performed "Dolphin" on CBS-TV's *The Late Show With David Letterman*. He also participated in a brief skit at the beginning of the show.



**New Year's Eve party...** Although many people hoped Prince would perform at Paisley Park on New Year's Eve, he didn't, choosing instead to have the DJ play a few new songs (including "Get Freaky"), and a remix of "Days Of Wild," during the party.

**American Music Awards...** Prince will receive the Award of Merit at the American Music Awards. The award will be presented January 30th at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

**The Brit Awards...** Prince is nominated for an award as "Best International Male Artist" on the Brit Awards, which will be held on February 20th in London.

**The Grammy Awards...** Prince, as  $\frac{1}{2}$ , has been nominated for a Grammy in the Best Male Pop Vocal Performance category for "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World." The Grammy Awards will be televised March 1st from the Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles.

**Rosie Gaines album...** Motown Records has picked up Rosie Gaines and will release her album, now entitled *Closer Than Close*, in early 1995. The album is set to include a track by Prince called "I Want U."

**Hornheads album...** The N.P.G. Hornz have renamed themselves Hornheads and have recorded a self-titled album on the Bone 2 Be Wild record label.

**Resignations...** Levi Seacer Jr., President of N.P.G. Records, and Prince's publicist, Karen Lee, both resigned when they returned from Berlin and the *MTV European Awards*. No word yet on replacements.

**N.P.G. magazine...** A second issue of *N.P.G.*, the official fanzine, has been completed and is on sale at the N.P.G. stores.

**Television special...** A Prince television special is being planned for the spring on ABC or NBC. There are no more details at the moment.

**New book...** A new book on Prince, simply called *Prince*, written by John Ewing, has been published in a series of CD-sized and shaped books. The book contains nothing new on Prince, but has many nice pictures.

# UPDATES Data Bank

## US promotional releases

The following promotional releases were issued in the States in 1994:

CD PRO 72516 The Most Beautiful Girl In The World: Staxowax [5:00] / Mustang Mix [6:22] / Brian's Mix [4:30] / Beautiful [5:55] / Album Mix [4:39] (symbol label disc)

12" PRO 72516 The Most Beautiful Girl In The World: Staxowax [5:00] / Mustang Mix [6:22] / Brian's Mix [4:30] / Beautiful [5:55] / Original Mix [4:39] (symbol label)

LP SPRO-71006 *I-800-NEW-FUNK*

CD PRO 71006 Love Sign [4:34] / 2gether [5:06]

CD PRO-CD-7000 Letitgo [Edit - 4:17] / Letitgo [Album Version - 5:33] (sticker on jewel case)

12" PRO-A-7000 Letitgo [Edit - 4:17] / Letitgo [Album Version - 5:33] (promo-only picture sleeve)

2LP PRO-A-7000 Come + Space: Universal Love Remix [6:10] / Funky Stuff Remix [5:42] / Letitgo: Q.D. III Instrumental Mix [5:00] / J. Swift #3 Instrumental [5:43] (double LP with sticker cover)

CD PRO-CD-7204-R Letitgo: Caviar Radio Edit [Short Version - 3:55] / Caviar Radio Edit [4:59] / Gerald B. On The Cool-Out Tip Radio Edit [4:34] / Original Album Version [5:33] / Caviar Street Edit [5:02] / Instrumental [5:02]

12" 0-41745-A Letitgo: Q.D. III Caviar Radio Edit [4:59] / Q.D. III Caviar Street Edit [5:02] / Q.D. III Instrumental [5:02] / Gerald B. On The Cool-Out Tip Radio Edit [4:34] / J. Swift Sherm Stick Edit [5:42] / J. Swift (-) Sherm Stick Edit [5:42] / Original Radio Edit [4:15] / Original Album Version [5:33] (white label advance issue)

CD PRO-CD-7241-R Space: Universal Love Radio Remix Edit (without rap) [3:57] / Acoustic Radio Remix [3:43] / Universal Love Radio Remix Edit (with rap) [3:57] / Funky Stuff Remix [5:42] / Album Version [4:28]

12" 0-41833-A Space: Universal Love Radio Remix [3:57] / Universal Love Remix [6:10] / Funky Stuff Remix [5:42] / Acoustic Radio Remix [4:42] / Funky Stuff Remix Dub [4:50] (white label advance issue)

LP PRO-A-7330 *Black Album*

LP 1-45793 *Black Album* (peach vinyl - not listed as promo)

Note: Releases for "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World," *I-800-NEW-FUNK*, and "Love Sign" are on Bellmark Records. All others are on Warner Bros.

## Video tapes

Five of Prince's 1994 concerts have appeared on video. The Glam Slam South Beach shows were filmed with several cameras and beamed via satellite to the Glam Slam clubs in Los Angeles and Minneapolis. The videos are taken from the satellite broadcast and are excellent quality (professionally shot).

Also professionally shot are the 1981 *Controversy* tour concert in Washington D.C. and the Canal+ rehearsal. *Diamonds And Pearls* tour rehearsal is also professionally shot, but from a far distance, making it less enjoyable.

The Radio City Music Hall, Palladium and Glam Slam West concerts are filmed by fans in the audience. The Glam Slam West video is very good quality for being privately shot.

Two videos possibly intended for commercial release on home video are also circulating amongst fans, *Glam Slam Ulysses* and *The Undertaker*.

- 21 Nov 1981: Washington D.C., Warner Theatre (70 mins)
- Mar 1992: *Diamonds And Pearls* tour rehearsal (100 mins)
- 26 Mar 1993: New York, Radio City Music Hall (80 mins)
- 5 May 1994: Canal+ rehearsal, Paris (60 mins)
- 7 June 1994: South Beach, Glam Slam (120 mins)
- 8 June 1994: South Beach, Glam Slam (45 mins)
- 9 June 1994: South Beach, Glam Slam (55 mins)
- 26 June 1994: Los Angeles, Glam Slam (60 mins)
- 13 July 1994: New York, Palladium (135 mins)

## Unreleased videos

- *Glam Slam Ulysses* (60 mins)
- Professionally shot video of an performance of *Glam Slam Ulysses*, at Glam Slam in Los Angeles, summer/fall 1993. The quality is pretty good, although the sound quality could be better.

*The Undertaker* (37 mins)

- Described in *UPTOWN #11*, this video was turned down by Warner Bros. for release as a home video. The quality on most circulating copies leaves a great deal to be desired. Track listing: "The Ride" / "Poor Goo" / "Honky Tonk Women" / "Bambi" / "The Undertaker" / "Dolphin."

## Audio tapes

### 1994 concerts

- 13 Feb: Chanhassen, Paisley Park (50 mins/EX)
- 4 May: Monte Carlo, Stars And Bars (110 mins/VG+)
- 6 May: Paris, Le Bataclan (105 mins/VG)
- 7 June: South Beach, Glam Slam (120 mins/VG)
- 8 June: South Beach, Glam Slam (60 mins/VG)
- 9 June: South Beach, Glam Slam (80 mins/VG+)
- 20 June: Los Angeles, Glam Slam (35 mins/VG)
- 21 June: Los Angeles, House Of Blues (50 mins/VG)
- 26 June: Los Angeles, Glam Slam (100 mins/VG+)
- 27 June: (matinee) Los Angeles, Glam Slam (40 mins/VG)
- 27 June: Los Angeles, Glam Slam (115 mins/VG+)
- 13 July: New York, Palladium (135 mins/VG+)
- 14 July: New York, Palladium (130 mins/VG+)
- 25 July: Minneapolis, Glam Slam (105 mins/VG+)
- 26 July: Minneapolis, Glam Slam (115 mins/VG+)
- 25 Nov: Berlin, Tränenpalast (120 mins/VG+)

### 1994 soundchecks

- 26 June: Los Angeles, Glam Slam (60 mins/G)
- 22 Nov: Berlin, Brandenburg Gate (20 mins/VG+)
- 23 Nov: Berlin, Brandenburg Gate (5 mins/VG+)

## Outtakes

- Since our last coverage in April 1994, a large number of studio recordings, demos, outtakes and alternate versions, have emerged. Most interesting is a 20-minute tape containing Prince's original *I'll Do Anything* demos: "The Rest Of My Life," "Make Believe," "I'll Do Anything," "Don't Talk 2 Strangers," "My Little Pill," "Empty Room," "There Is Lonely," and "Be My Mirror." The tape is highly interesting since it contains two songs that were not part of the planned soundtrack album, probably being rejected by the filmmakers or withdrawn by Prince, "The Rest Of My Life" and "Empty Room." They were replaced by "Wow" and "I Can't Love You Anymore."
- The Mayte songs we mentioned in *UPTOWN #16* are circulating amongst collectors: "However Much U Want" (a duet with Prince), "If I Could Get Your Attention," "Love's No Fun," "Latino Barbie Doll," and "Si Te Amo Esta Noche" (Spanish version of "If I Love U 2 Nite").
- There exists two alternate versions of "Get

**Wild**," one of which was broadcast on L.A. radio in the summer of 1994. This version is very similar to the released song, while the other version features Prince's vocals more prominently. An alternate version of "Super Hero" with Earth, Wind & Fire and input by Prince is also circulating.

A second studio version of "Days Of Wild" has appeared. This one is different from the one that was broadcast as part of *The Beautiful Experience*.

Studio versions of three likely candidates for inclusion on *The Gold Experience* have emerged: "Bil-ly Jack Bitch," "Pussy Control," and "Eye Hate U." The songs were recorded when being played over the PA during some of Prince's summer concerts.

# PRINCE/PUBLICATIONS Release It

This is a list of currently active Prince/P publications. Please continue to send us your Prince publications. Put us on your subscription list and we'll do the same.

## The Interactive Experience

- A new photocopied Prince/P magazine (in English) with bootleg reviews and news.
- *The Interactive Experience* • PO Box 541, Sheffield S9 4YN, England.

*The Continental* PO Box 21268, 3001 AG Rotterdam, Holland • Language: English.

*Diamond Factory* Global Namiki #401, 10-10 Nakamachi, Naka-ku, Hiroshima 730, Japan • Language: Japanese.

*Divinity* The Shockadelica Club, Ivan Vallejos de Frutos, c/San Virgilio, 4-40B, 28038 Madrid, Spain • Language: Spanish.

*Elephants And Flowers* Stichting Principality, Postbus 12026, NL-3501 AA Utrecht, Holland • Language: Dutch.

*The Erotic City Voice* Anja Lüders, Querenburger Höhe 97, 44801 Bochum, Germany • Language: German.

*N.P.G.* (the official P fanzine) Paisley Park Enterprises, 7801 Audbon Road, Chanhassen, MN 55317, USA • Language: English.

*Purple Kiss* 7 Avenue du Thiers #508, 06000 Nice, France • Language: French.

*Scandalous Magazine* Silkeborgvej 286, 8230 Åbyhøj, Denmark • Language: Danish.

*7 Magazine* PO Box 363, Chadstone Centre, VIC 3148, Australia • Language: English.

*The Voice* Kloosterstraat 50, 9150 Rupelmonde, Belgium • Language: Flemish.

P c/o Christian Loschi, Via Mengoni 9, 41012 Carpi (MO), Italy • Language: Italian.

*The P Family* (formerly known as *The Prince Family*) P.O. Box 2007, So. Hamilton, MA 01982-0007, USA • Language: English.

P Network Axel Aberle, Geierskopfweg 11, 65931 Frankfurt, Germany • Language: German.

# Ain't That

# a Bitch!

The *Black Album* finally received an official release by Warner Bros. on November 22nd 1994, seven years after it was first cancelled. In this article, Per Nilsen takes a closer look at the notorious album, which has become one of the most bootlegged records of all time.

SOME TIME BEFORE CHRISTMAS 1987, a record appeared on Warner Bros.' release schedule called "Something" by "Somebody." This "Somebody" was Prince, and the album was to be slipped into the shops with no artist details or promotion, its mission to flood the dancefloors with the most relentlessly funky dance music Prince had ever recorded. The album had no title to speak of, but with a plain black sleeve and only the catalogue number in peach on the spine, it became known as the *Black Album*.

All of a sudden, a week before its planned December 8th release, the album was withdrawn without explanation. It was speculated that Prince badly wanted to release the album, but Warner Bros. refused, feeling it was too lewd and uncompromising. Besides, they had not yet milked *Sign O' The Times* sufficiently, and by releasing another album they risked flooding the market. However, the reason why the *Black Album* never made the shops had nothing to do with Warner Bros. The reason was simple: Prince changed his mind. It was solely his decision to stop the record.

## Cutting edge funk

The *Black Album* was motivated by a strong need to prove that Prince was still daring and at the forefront of pop music. Despite the fact that *Sign O' The Times* contained some of Prince's "blackest" music in years, accusations that he was turning his back on his black roots and losing his funk abilities had struck a nerve in him. "So the *Black Album* was put together to show people, 'Yeah, I can do that kind of music if I want to,'" said Levi Seacer Jr. "It wasn't something he believed in because it was too easy," observed Cat. "Prince doesn't like simplicity. People say, 'How come he doesn't do that kind of music?' It's because it's too simple. He did it because a lot of people said he was losing it."

With the emergence of hip hop and rap as a new strong force in black music, Prince was for the first time in his career seen as somewhat old-fashioned and conservative, losing much of his street-level credibility in the process. This offended him even more than being accused of selling out the black elements of his music, so he set out to assemble a cutting edge dance record, with little or no concern for mainstream appeal.

In his liner notes for the *Lovesexy* tour programme, Prince explained the genesis of the album and why he pulled it by adopting the alter ego of Camille. He implies that Camille conceived of the

album as a spiteful rejoinder to critics who claimed he had lost his funky edge: "Camille set out to silence his critics. 'No longer daring – his enemies laughed.' 'No longer glam, his funk is half-assed... one leg is shorter than the other one is weak. His strokes are tepid, his colors are meek.'" Prince realized that the *Black Album* was a work of hate and he felt he was wrong in recording it. He believed that "Spooky Electric" convinced him to create this thing of "evil." Spooky Electric could be considered the dark side of Prince's persona or a symbol of Satan himself. Prince attributed his last-minute decision to abort the *Black Album* to God and the "Lovesexy" spirit, "the feeling you get when you fall in love, not with a girl or boy, but with the heavens above."

## "Blue Tuesday"

A week prior to the planned release date, Prince had taken the *Black Album* to the Minneapolis club Rupert's to gauge the reaction to it. At the club, he met a singer/poet called Ingrid Chavez, who sent him a note, saying, "Hi, remember me? Probably not, but that's OK, because we've never met. Smile. I love it when you smile." Prince introduced himself as Dexter, so Ingrid said she was Gertrude. They drove out together to Paisley Park, where they sat on the floor and talked. Suddenly, Prince left, saying he had a stomachache. Ingrid later learned that Prince had been nervous and was going through a crisis of conscience that made him realize that it would be wrong to release the album.

Prince has said that his decision to withdraw the album was influenced by a vision; he has talked of a crucial "dark night of the soul, when a lot of things happened all in a few hours," and referred to a vision of a vast field with the letters G-O-D hovering overhead. He refers to that night, Tuesday December 1st, as "Blue Tuesday" in his liner notes. Cat even wrote a song about it ("December 1st, 1987") for her planned debut album which never materialized.

It is clear that this awakening had a profound effect on Prince and became a major turning point for him. In the interview he gave to *Rolling Stone* in 1990, he talked about how this experience led him to re-evaluate the way he was leading his life and how he wrote and presented his music. "I was an expert in cutting people off in my life and disappearing without a glance back, never to return. Half the things people were writing about me were true. I was very angry a lot of the time back then and that was reflected in the album. I



learned from that album, but I don't want to go back."

Prince became very concerned about what he perceived to be his responsibility to his fans and younger kids. "I suddenly realized that we can die at any moment, and we'd be judged by the last thing we left behind. I didn't want that angry bitter thing to be the last thing." "It was very dark and negative," said Sheila E. "Prince thought, 'What if something happened to me before I'm able to put out another?' He couldn't sleep at night thinking about 10-year-old kids believing this is what Prince was about – guns and violence. He said, 'I can't leave this on little kids. I don't care if they pressed 500,000 copies.'" Prince has said that he made the music when he was in a "really depressed condition. That doesn't mean I don't like the music, but I don't want people to feel that kind of depression coming through in my music."

A week after cancelling the *Black Album*, Prince set about recording *Lovesexy*, an album that would reflect his new, positive frame of mind and convey the "lovesexy" feeling. According to many of the musicians and engineers who worked on the new album, the sessions were very lighthearted and joyous. Prince was more patient and open, and appeared to be ecstatic about the new music he was creating.

### Birthday party

The *Black Album* was made up of already existing tracks, recorded in late 1986 and the early part of 1987. The only exception is "When 2 R In Love," which was recorded in October 1987 at Paisley Park. The other tracks came from sessions at Sunset Sound in Los Angeles and in Prince's home studio. Horns were added to "Cindy C." and "Le Grind" at Paisley Park in October of 1987, when Prince began assembling tracks for the album. Also recorded around this time was the party segue that bookends "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" as well as Cat's rap on "Cindy C."

Three songs were recorded at Sunset Sound in December 1986 for a (December 12th) birthday party Prince was throwing for Sheila E.: "Bob George," "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton," and "Le Grind." These cuts were recorded for fun, simply because he wanted to contribute some fresh music to the party, which may or may not mean that he had ideas of ever releasing the songs.

"Rockhard In A Funky Place" dates back even further; it was recorded at Sunset Sound in October of 1986, and was left over when the *Crystal Ball* three-LP set was cut back to become *Sign O' The Times*. The song was also included on the album that Prince was considering releasing under the pseudonym of Camille when the three-LP idea met with resistance from Warner Bros. There are no songwriting credits to be found on the album, but "Rockhard In A Funky Place" was written around a horn arrangement by Eric Leeds, originally composed for another song. When Prince heard the arrangement, he liked it so much that he decided to write a new tune for it.

"Superfunkycalifragisexy" was cut in early 1987 in Prince's home studio. The song's "squirrel meat" rap was included in "Strange Relationship" when Prince previewed the *Sign O' The Times* show at First Avenue, March 21st 1987. "Dead On It" and "Cindy C." were also recorded in Prince's home studio around this time, prior to the *Sign O' The Times* tour.

Most of the tracks were recorded by Prince on his own. Horn players Eric Leeds and Matt "Atlanta Bliss" Blistan appear on "Cindy C.," "Le Grind," and "Rockhard In A Funky Place," while Sheila E. and Boni Boyer provide backing vocals on "Cindy C." and "Le Grind." Sheila also raps a line from "Holly Rock" in "Dead On It" and plays drums on "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton." Band members also take part in the "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" party chatter. The female voice of "Rockhard In A Funky Place" belongs to Susannah Melvoin.

Cat's rap on "Cindy C." is taken from J.M. Silk's early house track "Music Is The Key." "I didn't know I could rap," said Cat.

"He told me to check my mic. I said, 'Check, one, two' and I started saying 'Music is the key to set yourself free...' Prince said, 'Wow, you can rap.' I went, no I can't. He said, 'Say that again.' So I did the whole thing and he thought it was so amazing that he came up with all kinds of ideas." Cat's rap was later featured on a test pressing of *Lovesexy*, at the end of "Positivity." It was removed on the eventual release when Prince discovered that it was not an original lyric by Cat.

### Uninhibited

Funky, nasty and funny, the *Black Album* is "black" both in terms of its musical roots and its atmosphere. Early word trumpeted its explicit sexual content, and the album was going to be one of the first records to carry the new Parental Advisory stickers. But even though most songs place sex and lewdness above love and spirituality, the lyrics are not particularly controversial. Most startling is the violent "Bob George," a monologue by a man arguing angrily with his lady before shooting her. Some of the album's most sexually explicit lyrics are found in "Superfunkycalifragisexy," which contains the lines, "Take 'em to your crib and tie 'em to a chair and you make funny faces so they get real scared, then you turn on the neon, and you play with yourself till you turn 'em on." There is virtually no mention of love or affection, and the album has no spiritual references of note. The album was clearly not in tune with Prince's direction and contradicted most of the philosophies he had struggled to develop on his previous albums.

Hard and uncompromising, the *Black Album* contains some manic and intense funk in "Superfunkycalifragisexy," "Le Grind," "Cindy C.," and "Rockhard In A Funky Place." "Dead On It" has Prince rapping over a funky beat, poking fun at the rap fraternity, while the dark and menacing "Bob George" features Prince speaking in an electronically distorted voice over a drum beat. The strangely titled "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" is a frantic jazz rock fusion-style instrumental. The only relief from this fierce musical barrage is the tender, slow-paced "When 2 R In Love," which seems strangely out of place in this collection. Not surprisingly, it was the only tune to be carried over to *Lovesexy*, where it was much more at home.

The music of the *Black Album* has none of the accessible pop appeal of much of Prince's earlier music. Lacking attractive melodies and catchy hooks, most songs rely more on rhythm than melody or harmony. The songwriting is sketchy, giving the impression that Prince casually tossed off the songs, writing and recording them very fast. Overall, the music has a spontaneous feel and a raw, unpolished quality. Interestingly, *Dirty Mind* was conceived under somewhat similar circumstances, being made up of demos that Prince did purely for his own enjoyment, not intending them for public consumption, and although the *Black Album* and *Dirty Mind* are lightyears apart musically, they both have a vibrancy and tough, unsophisticated sound and contain some of Prince's most relentlessly physical music and forthright lyrics.

Most songs are evidence of Prince's patented fine-boned minimalism, but "Cindy C.," "Le Grind," and "Rockhard In A Funky Place" preface the riotous and complex arrangements of *Lovesexy*. Prince incorporates frantic backing vocals, treated voices, shouted instructions, and all kinds of sound effects to create a party atmosphere, not too far removed from what he achieved in such *Sign O' The Times* tracks as "Housequake," "Play In The Sunshine," and "It's Gonna Be A Beautiful Night." Similarly, "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" is bookended by some party chatter. A similar unrestrained, joyous live band atmosphere was created on *Lovesexy*.

Mixing sung, spoken, and rapped lyrics, the album is also noteworthy for Prince's vocals. Throughout, he uses a multitude of different voices, from the sped-up "Camille" voice in "Rockhard In A Funky Place," to the slowed-down spoken intro to "Le Grind" and the distorted voice in "Bob George." The album contains more rapped and spoken lyrics than any of his previous records.



## Party atmosphere

The album begins with a sound similar to a rush of a wind before "Le Grind" jumps into action. Prince relays a message with his voice slowed down to a mere mumble. The slowed down portion is both his welcome to those who have found his album and a challenge to them to listen to it. That this message starts off "So, you found me..." indicates that the decision to originally market the album with little fanfare, and with no outward designation that it was a Prince project, was planned from the very start.

Centred around a horn motif and a smooth, funky bass line, "Le Grind" is a fast, pounding, and highly rhythmic concoction. It sounds very much like a live recording, with frantic backing vocals. A party mood is established by occasional use of conversation in the background, repeated instructions to "put it where it feels good," as well as some breathless panting. Some barrelhouse piano spices up the arrangement, but the whole thing gets fairly repetitious since the tune is basically a one-chord vamp (although a bridge is thrown in for some variation), in the tradition of uptempo jams such as "Baby, I'm A Star," "America," and "It's Gonna Be A Beautiful Night."

"Le Grind" is not one of Prince's more introspective songs, but behind its party feel is a message about the need for personal liberation, expressed through the "nouveau dance" called "Le Grind," where the girls and boys are to get close and "have no fear." Prince's admonition that "it is much too late to be shy" also suggests the idea that one has to free oneself from being self-conscious and inhibited. The intent of the line "Don't be shy" as part of his encouragement to his partner in "Orgasm" (on *Come*) is quite similar.

Prince expresses this liberation in terms so extreme that he does not even care if the woman's boyfriend is around. The line "Is that your boyfriend? I don't care" is similar to Prince's indifference to any possible concern by his girlfriend if he were to make love to another woman in the earlier "Let's Pretend We're Married." Continuing with the sexual imagery, Prince says that they should "get naked and we'll see the real you," which again suggests the idea of freeing one's self and shedding one's inhibitions.

The most explicit language of the song is "Up and down, up and down, feels so good. Up and down, up and down, like a pony would." Prince obviously liked the image of the unrestrained and free-spirited pony, and it occurs in the later songs "Alphabet St." ("Jerk your body like a horny pony would") and the B-side "Horny Pony." And as it just would not be a Prince album with at least one reference to the androgynous, Prince includes the lyrics about the boys saying "Yeah, yeah," the girls saying "Oh, yeah," and all the others saying "Hell, yeah."

The spontaneous party feel continues unabated with "Cindy C.," a rousing number with a fast, driving beat and a contagious chorus. A funky horn riff and a rhythm guitar lick contribute to an unrelenting groove, and much like "Le Grind," the song vamps at length on one chord, focusing on whimsical vocal interaction between Prince and the background singers. There is an abundance of musical ideas, including percussion fills by Sheila E., guitar outbursts, jazzy horn interludes, and towards the end, Cat's "Music Is The Key" rap.

Drawing on inspiration from model Cindy Crawford, the focus of "Cindy C." is the fictional character of Cindy C., "a high-class model over in Paris, France." By describing how anyone can play with her as long as they "pay the usual fee," Prince's Cindy has more than a passing similarity to a prostitute. Other criticisms of her include Prince asking Cindy where she got her beauty mark, implying that her beauty is artificially crafted out of make-up. Prince even asks "Don't all girls look the same?", as if suggesting that too many women are willing subscribers to a pre-determined idea of what beauty should look like.

The superficial nature of what Cindy C. represents is summed up by Prince when he tells her that he wants to show her off to his friends because she "is the living end." The message is that she is just

window dressing, a bracelet to hang on his arm. Earlier in the song, Prince tells Cindy that he is sure she is "quite intelligent, a wizard at math and all that shit," but his real interest is to get her in her birthday suit in order to "fly her kite." Again, the message is one of dismissing any deeper qualities Cindy may possess, in favour of a superficial romp in the nude.

Near the end of the song, a woman yells out a warning of "Cindy, behind you," and we hear Prince desperately pleading "Come on Cindy." However, the "super-fine heifer's" response is more or less one of revulsion as she exclaims "Oh my God!" with Prince then repeating "Come on Cindy," and adding "Don't you want to play with me?" Cindy reveals her real thoughts when she first answers with an insincere "Uh, yes," which she immediately follows with an unceremonious "No." She tries to cover up with a vague "Wait," but it is clear that she would really not want to have anything to do with the man. Prince again pleads for her to play with him, and this time, remembering her role of being a pop culture plaything, she answers in the affirmative. But Prince's character, aware of her rejection of him, lets out an agonized wail of "What's the matter with me Cindy?", to which she desperately responds "Nothing." The exchange ends with Prince wailing an anguished scream.

The dialogue segment of the song reinforces the idea of Cindy as being akin to a prostitute. If she was to follow her real feelings, she would not have anything to do with those who just want to pay and play, but in spite of her true emotions she agrees to go ahead with the game. The warning shouted by Cindy's friend suggests that even this other woman is aware of the phoniness of the whole situation. This exchange also reveals the faults of the male character. Prince presents a man who seeks his own sense of self worth based on persuading Cindy to play with him. When she commits the unpardonable offence of letting her real feelings be known, Prince's character assumes that there must be something wrong with him. In this manner Prince has condemned both those who market a superficial society as well as those who unquestioningly buy into it.

## Stripped down

In contrast to the somewhat cluttered arrangements of the first two tracks, "Dead On It" is stripped down, relying on an accented drum machine pattern, a "walking" bass line, and some rhythm guitar phrases. Prince's good-natured criticism of rappers is delivered in his own talk-rapping style. Sheila E. makes a brief appearance with her line "I'm badder than the wicked witch" from "Holly Rock."

Prince's main criticism is that too many rappers are anything but musicians. According to Prince, rappers are tone deaf and any attempt by them to sing would immediately clear out the audience. He also makes fun of the rapper's stereotypical image by having the rapper in this song boast about how his oversized jewellery and gaudy gold teeth are dead on it. But Prince informs the mistaken rapper that what they need to do is to be dead on their musicianship. And in contrast to the majority of rappers, Prince mentions at the end of the song that while he may be a little "schizy" (as in eccentric), nobody can fuck with him because he is dead on it. To help the song from being too critical or serious, Prince includes a part about licking the sisters on their knees. As he says in the song, it does not really have anything to do with the subject of the song, but it is his record, and he is paying the bills, so he does what he wants. After all, he knows he is dead on it.

Prince slows down the pace of the album with the gentle "When 2 R In Love," which comes as a relief after the rhythmic onslaught of the previous three tracks. The album's most melodic song, "When 2 R In Love" is sparsely orchestrated, focusing on a harp-sounding synth, bass and drum machine beat. Prince uses his delicate falsetto voice.

The song is as tender as it is explicit. It begins with a softly whispered intro in which Prince says "So fierce you looked tonight. The brightest star pales to your sex. Before we do anything, I'll just talk

to you.” The song has Prince explaining in romantic terms what it is like when two people are in love. The first few illustrations are rather gentle in nature, such as the description of how two lovers will whisper secret songs only the two of them can hear, or how their stomachs will pound when they see each other. However, as the song progresses the lyrics become more fervent, much like the building of passion between the two lovers. Prince compares the speed of their hips to a runaway train, and mentions how they shiver at the mere thought of penetration. Prince foreshadows the oral sex theme of the song “Come” by mentioning how “the thought of his tongue in the V of her love, in his mind this thought it leads the pack.”

In a manner not unusual for Prince, the building intensity and eroticism of the lyrics is paralleled with the idea of a spiritual or emotional cleansing. He invites his lover to bathe with him, each surrendering to the other’s passion as if drowning in emotion. Prince continues with the references to water by mentioning how he wants to touch his lover’s body until her “river’s an ocean.” Ultimately, what Prince envisions in this song is a love so pure that even their kisses are synonymous with the notion that there is nothing forbidden to the two lovers.

## Menace

After the brief interlude of “When 2 R In Love,” the album returns to unrelenting rhythms with “Bob George.” This is Prince at his unconventional best, telling a story from the twisted viewpoint of a sociopathic misanthrope. Prince’s voice is slowed down and distorted beyond recognition so that it takes on a deep and threatening character. The musical soundtrack to this harrowing “psycho drama” is stark, adding to the feeling of intimidation and menace. The skeletal arrangement consists mostly of handclaps and a drum machine, with the bass drum tuned so it plays a 12-bar blues progression. A guitar enters after a while and Prince adds eerie synth chords and fills, as well as all manner of sound effects.

At the very start we hear, as if part of an introduction, the man telling his woman that he wants to see her dance. The main body of the song then begins, with the man confronting his girlfriend by demanding to know where she got her new coat and diamond ring. We never hear the replies of the woman, just the man’s sarcastic responses to what she says. This technique works very well in context of the song because it serves to make the relationship between the man and woman all the more one-sided and hopeless. He does not believe that she purchased the items herself, and accuses her of seeing “that rich motherfucker again.” When he feels that she is playing him for a fool he threatens to “slap [her] ass into the middle of next week.” He adds “I’m sorry baby, that’s the rules” just to let her know who is the boss.

Prince’s attention to detail and his odd sense of humour are represented quite well in this song. For example, the lyrics “For someone who can’t stand them TV dinners, you sure eat enough of them motherfuckers” not only reveals that the man is so cheap that all he brings home to eat are TV dinners, but he throws into his woman’s face the number of them that she eats. This makes it seem as if he resents even incurring the expenses of having to buy the things. Throwing in lines such as “when did you have a job?”, the image Prince creates is one of a lower income, low class hell hole dominated by this repulsive man.

Prince also directs his sense of humour at himself when the man asks his woman what her rich boyfriend does for a living. When she tells him that man she has been seeing, Bob, manages rock stars, the man asks which one. Taunting the woman, he says in reply to her answer “Prince? That skinny motherfucker with the high voice? Please, who do I look like, yesterday’s fool?” The humour works on two fronts, the first being that Prince used a slowed down voice to speak the line about how Prince is a high-voiced motherfucker. The second is the irony of the line “who do I look like,” for again, it is Prince speaking the part.

He then threatens to kill her. When he pulls out his gun, in an obvious phallic reference, he is taunted by the woman for having a small one. His response is to say that it might be little, but that it is also loud. As if to make it seem as if we are hearing the gun from the man’s perspective, instead of the “pop” of a handgun, we hear several bursts of automatic gunfire. He then makes her go into the other room in order to put on the reddish-brown wig he bought her. This is another of those little quirky details that make “Bob George” such an intriguing number. That he has to specify which wig reveals that he has certainly bought several wigs for her to wear. That almost makes it seem as if he is the type of man who makes his woman wear different wigs in order to fulfil some fetish of his own. The fact that he chooses this unusual moment to order his girlfriend to put on a specific wig can be seen as another way in which he totally controls and dominates her. But as she is in the other room he ends up shooting her by accident. His initial response is a mere “oh,” but almost instantly he says “gotchya!” and just keeps on shooting.

As the song continues it sinks more and more into the bizarre, as if the man is losing all touch with reality. Speaking to nobody, the man tells Bob, whom he knows “is out there,” that he wants to see him dance. He adds to this unusual request the admonition “You said you was funky.” The police arrive on the scene in full force, but the man is able to drive them away with his little gun. A policeman, played by Prince, says “Oh no, the nigger’s got his wife with him. Let’s get the hell out of here!” While the man may have thought that he kicked the police’s collective ass, their leaving may have been nothing more than the police deciding that they did not want to get involved in a “domestic dispute.” There is also an overtone of racism to the policeman’s decision to leave since Prince speaks the part with his “white” voice.

Next, the man places a telephone call to Mr. George. Once Bob gets on the line, the man tries to intimidate him by telling him “This is your conscience, motherfucker!” After asking why Bob can’t leave “motherfuckers alone,” the man asks Bob why they cannot just dance. Bob’s responses are heard by means of a voice so speeded up that it is nothing more than an electronic squeak. As with the silent girlfriend, the distorted squeak of Bob’s voice reflects the viewpoint of the main character of the song for whom others are unimportant.

When Bob’s voice is slowed down to one fourth of its original speed, it is possible to understand what he says. But instead of an actual conversation between the two, the slowed down song reveals that all Bob says, with Prince speaking the part in a meek voice, is “Yes, I’ll do anything. Please don’t hurt me.” That phrase, in whole or in part, is repeated throughout the telephone conversation. What it probably represents is not so much what Mr. George actually said on the phone as much as it does what the man wanted to hear.

The conversation continues to get more and more hostile and irrational. Near the very end of the song, the man says “B-O-B, spell that shit backwards, what’s it say? Same motherfuckin’ shit.” This is just the type of off-the-wall insult that one might expect from somebody who is on the edge of insanity.

“Bob George” presents a textbook example of how not to treat a woman, but the song does not seem to have any particular message behind it. However, from the repeated use of phrases such as “let’s see you dance,” it is clear that this subject is important to the anti-hero of the song. To some extent, the man’s demands to see his woman dance, or even Bob for that matter, may represent a bully’s attempt to control others. This seems to be somewhat confirmed in the way the man tells Bob “Let’s see you dance. You said you were funky,” as if he were challenging him to see who is the baddest of the two. And his confused plea of “Why can’t we just dance?” may just be reflective of the man trying to stay in control of his ever loosening grip on his world. The only other Prince song that comes close to the stark and violent character of this song would be “Papa,” another spoken composition.

## Squirrel meat

Some of the dark, menacing atmosphere of "Bob George" carries over into "Superfunkticalifragisexy," a faster, more conventional funk effort. Prince uses squirrel meat, served up by "Brother Maurice," as some sort of funk ambrosia which not only helps people keep on dancing, but also serves as a nasty aphrodisiac. Edgy and hypnotic, "Superfunkticalifragisexy" is one of the album's most compelling tracks. Boasting a "Controversy"-style rhythm guitar lick, the song is basically a one chord tune. A tight, funky groove is created by locking in the guitar phrase with an ingeniously programmed drum machine pattern (supplemented by live percussion) and a deep, more or less static bass part. Prince colours the tune with synths. The song opens with a descending, vaguely "operatic" melody line which is followed by Prince's demented laughter. Prince raps the verses while the chorus consists of a chant of the title phrase. Prince's use of several different vocal styles adds to the tension of the song. Interestingly, the song's combination of rapped verses and a quick chanted chorus predates later rap/funk efforts such as "Days Of Wild," "Now," "Race," and "Pussy Control."

Nasty is about the kindest word to use to describe the effects if one drinks too much of Prince's own peculiar brand of Funk-Aide. In addition to wanting to party all night, "if you do too much your skin will be sensitive to the touch, the first person to touch you, you'll want to fuck." The song continues to explore the murky side of sex with Prince saying that the next thing one would do is to tie the person to a chair and frighten them by making funny faces at them. Not stopping there, Prince advises that you excite your partner by then turning on the neon light and masturbating yourself.

The song is not an example of what some perceive as Prince's misogyny. This is so because here it is the woman who is in charge, with Prince tied to the chair. This is suggested by the fact that Prince speaks in the first person when he says "this chair goes round and round, I feel like a clown, cause I'm stripped down." But even if his captor does not remember his name the next day, Prince gets even by having a signed confession that says he was the best she had ever had.

Prince's "squirrel meat" rap was included in a version of "Strange Relationship" that was played during the preview of the *Sign O' The Times* show at First Avenue, March 21st 1987 (and sometimes in "It's Gonna Be A Beautiful Night" on the *Sign O' The Times* tour). The early version of the rap featured the lyric "If your body gets tired..." which was changed for the album to "If your body needs water..." which fits better into the rhyme scheme of the song. References to "Brother Brooks" and "Brother Wally," i.e. Gregory Allen Brooks and Wally Safford, who were in the band at the time, replaced "Brother Maurice" in the early version.

## Prince and Sheila

"2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" begins with the sounds of people engaged in party conversation, with a "Housequake"-style drumbeat in the background. This introduction acts as a transition from "Superfunkticalifragisexy," with Maurice wanting to be served squirrel meat. Then, a slimy sounding man (Prince) says "Cat, what's happening babe?" She brushes him off, saying "Get out of my way Bobby, it's not that type of party." The fact that Bobby wants to introduce her to some musician friends of his suggests that his last name might be George, in another continuation from a previous song on the album.

"2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" begins in earnest with a chant of the title phrase. West Compton is an economically depressed, predominantly black town outside Los Angeles. There is no direct correlation between the name of the piece and the music itself, but Prince may have been trying to convey the idea that even an area as West Compton can be changed for the better through the power of love. Here it is two people who are united in love-making, their passion being translated into pure music, the force to bring about a

transformation of all around them.

Basically an improvisational jam, "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" is a fast-paced, somewhat chaotic instrumental piece. The number features live drumming by Sheila E. and Prince flexing his musical muscles with a succession of solos, on organ, synth and bass. Although lacking Eric Leeds' saxophone, "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" is often likened to Madhouse's music. However, in contrast to most Madhouse pieces, "2 Nigs United 4 West Compton" lacks a definable melody or easily recognized riff or phrase, and the piece is "sketchier" and not as tightly structured as most Madhouse material.

Prince creates a musical dialogue between a guitar "turnaround" lick (very similar to the guitar part in the slow section of "Bardance") and some synth phrases. His bass playing is fast and fluid. The organ is the most prominent instrument in the first portion of the number. The song builds to a frenzied climax, before organ, synths and the guitar drop out and Prince launches into a bass solo. The number then returns to the main section, but with the synths taking over from the organ as the focal point. The closing part features Sheila playing along to weird sampled sounds.

## Sexual frustration

The title of "Rockhard In A Funky Place" makes a play on words, the first meaning having a musical connotation, and the second an obvious sexual significance. Dealing with sexual frustration, the song is hardly a musical masterpiece. The song evolved from Eric Leeds' jazz-flavoured horn arrangement, but the composition feels somewhat disjointed, with Prince's verses sounding like they belonged to a different song. Atlanta Bliss' and Eric's intricate horn part follows the chorus which is made up of the title phrase. The horn arrangement was lifted for use in "I Could Never Take The Place Of Your Man" in the *Sign O' The Times* show. Lacking melodic or harmonic interest, the song was probably chosen for its loose, syncopated groove achieved by rhythmic counterpoint between a synth and horn phrase and backbeat drums.

The main character of the song, an unidentified man, is in a "house of ill repute," trying to deal with all his fears. The taunting female voice which says "Ohh, honey I'm scared of you" adds to the feeling of insecurity surrounding the male subject of the song. His frustration and inhibition is further suggested by the line "Here comes a lady so you cover up," as if he is trying to hide his perpetual state of arousal. This is followed by the sound of women clapping their hands and saying things like "See you! Come on!," again as if he is being mocked.

The man's horniness is referred to by the lines about "something near your leg is haunting you" as well as "You was workin' on a line you could drop on her, but you couldn't concentrate when your dick saw her." Prince seems to suggest that the man could get on with his life ("maybe you could play guitar") if he could find satisfaction somewhere.

Prince points out that whether the man is looking for a woman to love, or even love of God, he is all too soon back in the house, putting his head back to relax again. This seems like a possible masturbation reference, as if the man just gives up his quest for something more meaningful for some quick self pleasure. Even the line "I just hate to see an erection go to waste" suggests masturbation, as if the man decides to please himself if there is no one else around while he is aroused.

Just as the song fades out Prince can be heard saying "We will rock y'all. 'Til then keep your finger on the trigger." He then plays one of his musical tricks by having the song come to a false ending. After a second or two of silence following the conclusion of the song, there is a tone and Prince can be heard saying "What sort of fuck ending was that?" Prince used the same technique in the extended 12" version of "Mountains," and repeated the trick in "Alphabet St. (This Is Not Music, This Is A Trip)."





### An instant collector's item

Warner Bros. wasn't overwhelmed by the *Black Album* in 1987. There was a decided fear that the record was too limited in its scope and that its overall "blackness" would alienate Prince's pop audience and his youngest fans. Prince's management team was also apprehensive, fearing that the album would result in Prince losing part of his fan base and put an unnecessary limitation on his appeal.

The plan was for the *Black Album* to be sneaked out with a minimum of fuss or promotional effort. Warner Bros. hoped that the record would appeal to black urban radio and clubs without competing with *Sign O' The Times* in the mainstream pop market place. Promo CDs and LPs had already been dispatched to Warner Bros./WEA representatives and the pressing of the LP was underway in the Alsdorf pressing plant in Germany, while CDs were being pressed at a CD plant in the States when Prince abruptly decided to cancel the album. Prince called Warner Bros. Chairman Mo Ostin directly himself, asking him to have the album withdrawn. He didn't expound on his motives; he just pleaded that he didn't want the album out. Mo Ostin obliged without questioning Prince's motives.

An estimated 500,000 LPs had been pressed. Reclaiming and destroying all copies was a difficult task and created monumental problems. There were products on the loading docks, boxed, addressed and ready to go, so it was major panic to try to figure out how to cease the shipping process without creating a major in-house theft situation as people knew the album was going to become an instant collector's item. Many Warner Bros. executives got copies, while Prince himself had a box of LPs, which he gave out to personal friends. In the end, very few copies got out, but with the result that the copies that did escape today are worth a fortune. Some 100 vinyl copies escaped destruction, while less than 10 CDs are rumoured to exist. The album quickly became one of the most bootlegged items of all time.

### Prolific

The *Black Album* is not one of Prince's most accessible albums, and it is unlikely that it would have been a commercial success had it been released as planned in 1987. The album would probably have had a bigger impact than its sales would have suggested. To this day, it is a record that people either love or hate, and it would have polarized Prince's audience to a larger extent than most of his previous releases. Not having heard *Lovesexy* or any of his subsequent work, the critics would have had a field day at the time, arguing the pros and cons of the album and discussing whether this was Prince's

move into the future, his next step in his musical evolution, or if it was just a sidetrack.

In terms of attracting publicity and helping to build on his mystique, withdrawing the *Black Album* in 1987 was probably a very smart move. Pretty soon bootleg copies found their way to the press, and thrilled at getting such a hot item, most critics praised the album. The album was even voted one of the best albums of the year in *Rolling Stone's* annual readers poll.

With the release of *Lovesexy* only four months later, the non-release of the *Black Album* made many realize just how prolific Prince is and it began to dawn on fans that there existed a whole world of unreleased Prince material. Within a year or so, the Prince bootleg market opened up and unreleased Prince recordings became a hot subject for many fans.

The *Black Album* was cutting edge in 1987, when "Cindy C." (Crawford) was barely known as a model. "Bob George" was shocking before gangsta rap, while Prince's dismissal of some of the sillier elements of rap in "Dead On It" seems justified. However, in 1994 the album's time clearly has passed and it is obvious that legend somehow made the album more important than it is.

Since its last-minute cancellation in 1987, a release of the *Black Album* has been on the cards many times (though not as often as rumour has had it). There were discussions in 1991, when Warner Bros. were eager to release some kind of greatest hits compilation to avoid over-saturating the market with an album of new music after the disappointing sales of *Graffiti Bridge*. The *Black Album* was go-



ing to have been one CD as part of a two-CD set.

Despite its near-release in the past, it took many by surprise when Warner Bros./WEA announced that the album was finally going to get an official release last November. However, this time it made more sense than previously. After all, one of Prince's reasons for the withdrawal of the album in the first place was that he didn't want to be judged by the last thing he left behind. Apparently, since "Prince" no longer exists, the problem of him being remembered by the *Black Album* is no longer a drawback to its release.

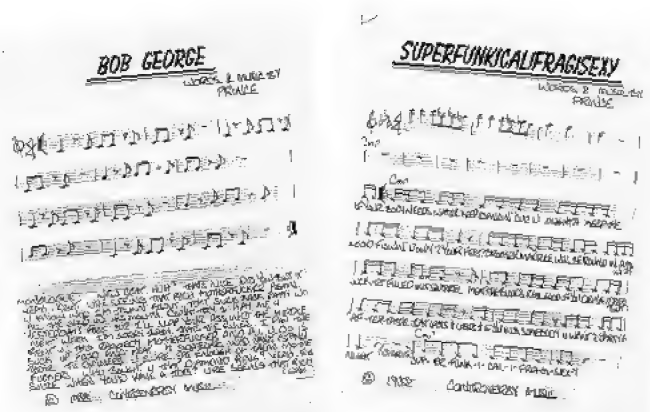
The album will only be sold for two months, which will almost guarantee that the thousands of fans who already have a bootleg copy will rush out to get the album. By making the album available only for a limited time, it will also have a better chance at having an impact on the charts (before vanishing quickly).

## Black and Gold

The eventual release of the album was instigated by Warner Bros. "We have wanted to put it out for years," said Warner Bros. publicist Bob Merlis. Prince is said to be "spiritually against" the album. Speaking on Prince's behalf in 1994, Karen Lee, his publicist up until recently, observed: "He feels like he wrote that album when he was a different person. He was angry, and it wasn't music he ever wanted to get out. How can you tell him, as an artist, what to do with his music? He's like, 'I'm in a whole different space now, the world is in a different space; the contribution I want to make doesn't sound like that.'"



Performing "Superfunkalifragisexy" on the *Lovesexy* tour 1988.



Many concluded that the release of the album was a means to a mutually desired end: Warner Bros. gets a much-talked about and already-produced album in time for Christmas, while Prince gets another disc closer to getting out of his record contract. However, the album will *not* count toward the fulfilment of his contract. Prince's goal all along has been to get Warners to release *The Gold Experience* as soon as possible. To that end, he sent his attorney to negotiate with Warners. The deal he came back with provided for them to pay Prince \$4 million upfront, release the *Black Album* in November, and *The Gold Experience* early 1995. The deal further stipulated that Prince would record a soundtrack to a to-be-determined Warner Bros. film. The three-album deal would count as two albums toward the remaining four albums of Prince's Warner Bros. contract. Prince agreed to the terms and everything seemed set.

Prince's attorney was en route to Warner Bros. to pick up the cheque and sign off on the papers when Prince had a last-minute change of mind about the deal, ostensibly about wanting more money. The attorney advised Prince that it was a very good deal and that he would not be able to get more money from Warners. The deal was subsequently cancelled and Prince's attorney quit a week later. At that time, there was a turnover in Warners' top management. Lenny Waronker and Mo Ostin are both out, and Danny Goldberg, current head of Atlantic Records, will be appointed to the label's top post. These changes restricted Waronker's and Ostin's power to do deals, but they were somehow able to rescue the *Black Album* from the original three-album deal, and Prince signed his agreement on October 25th to release the album. He received approximately \$1 million.

The new Warner Bros. regime has not moved in yet, so they have had no dealings with Prince. The release of *The Gold Experience* will have to be negotiated from scratch in January with the new powers. This means that *The Gold Experience* will probably not be out in the first quarter of 1995, but more likely the first half of the year. At the time of writing (late 1994), it is not on Warner Bros.' 1995 release schedule. Karen Lee has said that the situation with *The Gold Experience* has left Prince "distracted." Unquestionably, this album contains some very strong material, including several potential hits, and it is not difficult to understand Prince's frustration, not knowing when or even *if* it will be released. There is also a more immediate reason why Prince wants to release the album as soon as possible: he simply needs money. One way to get cash is to tour, but it would be pointless to tour behind *Come*, which has already dropped from the charts, and the *Black Album*, a seven-year old album which doesn't represent where Prince is currently at. Clearly, he wants to tour in support of *The Gold Experience*, but he has got to get the album out there first.

By PER NILSEN with help from DAVID J. MAGOZIARZ.

Previous articles on Prince's albums have been published in the following issues of UPTOWN: *For You* [13], *Prince* [13], *Dirty Mind* [18], *Controversy* [11], 1999 [17], *Purple Rain* [14], *Diamonds And Pearls* [2], 4P [7], and *Come* [10].

(update)

The first issue of *UPTOWN*, back in October 1991, included an article on and a detailed list of songs Prince had written for other artists at that point. The list was revised for the second edition of Per Nilsen's *Prince: A Documentary*, but we felt there was a need for a new update, covering the years 1981-94. This time we're listing the songs in an approximate chronological order, which makes it easier to trace how Prince's songwriting for other artists has evolved.

All songs on this list are written solely by Prince (as himself or using a pseudonym), unless otherwise is noted. The list does not include information on *which* name Prince used since songwriting details are often contradictory, with different names being used in sleeve credits (if there are any), on sheet music and when a song is registered with ASCAP.

List compiled by PER NILSEN and LARS O. EINARSSON.

A collage of various Japanese movie posters, including titles like 'The Yakuza', 'The Godfather', and 'The Godfather Part II', arranged in a fan-like pattern.

### The Time

Cool  
Get It Up  
Girl  
Oh, Baby  
The Stick

Azz Izz

## I Don't Wanna Stop

### Vanity 6

3 x 2 = 6  
Bite The Beat  
Drive Me Wild  
If A Girl Answers (Don't Hang Up)  
Make-Up  
Nasty Girl  
Wet Dream

with Jesse Johnson

with Terry Lewis

### What Time Is It?

777-9311  
Gigolos Get Lonely Too  
I Don't Wanna Leave You  
Onedayimgonnabesomebody  
The Walk  
Wild And Loose

with Dez Dickerson

"777-9311" single B-side

Grace

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*The Wild Heart*

## Stand Back

with Stevie Nicks

### A Private Heaven

## Sugar Walls

### *The Glamorous Life*

The Belle Of St. Mark  
The Glamorous Life  
Next Time Wipe The Lipstick Off Your Collar  
Noon Rendezvous  
Oliver's House  
Shortberry Strawcake

with Sheila E.





## The Time

The Bird  
Chili Sauce  
Ice Cream Castles  
If The Kid Can't Make You Come  
Jungle Love  
My Drawers

## Ice Cream Castle

1984 WB/The Starr \* Com pany

with Morris Day, Jesse Johnson  
with Morris Day, Paul Peterson  
with Morris Day, Jesse Johnson  
with Morris Day, Jesse Johnson  
with Morris Day  
with Morris Day, Jesse Johnson

## The Time

## "Jungle Love" single B-side

1984 WB/The Starr \* Com pany

Tricky

## Apollonia 6

A Million Miles (I Love You)  
Blue Limousine  
Happy Birthday, Mr. Christian  
In A Spanish Villa  
Ooo She She Wa Wa  
Sex Shooter  
Some Kind Of Lover

## Apollonia 6

1984 WB/The Starr \* Com pany

with Lisa Coleman

with Brenda Bennett

## André Cymone

## AC

1985 CBS

The Dance Electric

## 94 East

Just Another Sucker

## Minneapolis Genius

1985 Hot Piz k

with Pepé Willie

## Sheila E.

A Love Bizarre

## Romance 1600

1985 Paisley Park

with Sheila E.

## The Family

Desire  
High Fashion  
Mutiny  
Nothing Compares 2 U  
The Screams Of Passion  
Susannah's Pajamas  
Yes

## The Family

1985 Paisley Park

with Eric Leeds  
with Eric Leeds

## Mazarati

100 MPH

## Mazarati

1986 Paisley Park

## The Bangles

Manic Monday

## Different Light

1986 CBS

## Kenny Rogers

## They Don't Make Them Like They Used To

1986 RCA

You're My Love

## Sheila E.

Boy's Club  
Koo Koo  
Love On A Blue Train  
One Day (I'm Gonna Make You Mine)  
Pride And The Passion

## Sheila E.

1987 Paisley Park

with Sheila E.  
with Sheila E.  
with Sheila E.  
with Sheila E.  
with Sheila E.

## Madhouse

One  
Two  
Three  
Four  
Five  
Six  
Seven  
Eight

## 8

1987 Paisley Park

## Deborah Allen

Telepathy

## Telepathy

1987 RCA

## Sheena Easton

## No Sound But A Heart

1987 EMI

Eternity

## Jill Jones

All Day, All Night  
Baby, You're A Trip  
For Love  
G-Spot  
Mia Bocca  
My Man  
Violet Blue

## Jill Jones

1987 Paisley Park

## Nona Hendryx

Baby Go-Go

## Female Trouble

1987 EMI

## Taja Sevelle

If I Could Get Your Attention  
Wouldn't You Love To Love Me?

## Taja Sevelle

1987 Paisley Park

## Madhouse

Nine  
Ten  
Eleven  
Twelve  
Thirteen  
Fourteen  
Fifteen  
Sixteen

with Eric Leeds, Levi Seacer Jr., Sheila E.  
with Eric Leeds, Levi Seacer Jr., Sheila E.  
  
with Eric Leeds, Levi Seacer Jr., Sheila E.  
with Eric Leeds

## 16

1987 Paisley Park

## Madhouse

Ten And 1/2

with Eric Leeds, Levi Seacer Jr., Sheila E.

## "Ten" single B-side

1987 Paisley Park

## Madhouse

Thirteen And 1/4

with Eric Leeds, Levi Seacer Jr., Sheila E.

## "Thirteen" single B-side

1988 Paisley Park

<b>Dale</b>	<b><i>Riot In English</i></b> 1988 Paisley Park
So Strong	
<b>Chaka Khan</b>	<b><i>CK</i></b> 1988 Warner Bros
Sticky Wicked	
<b>Three O'Clock</b>	<b><i>Vermillion</i></b> 1988 Paisley Park
Neon Telephone	
<b>Sheena Easton</b>	<b><i>The Lover In Me</i></b> 1988 MCA
101 Cool Love	
<b>Madonna</b>	<b><i>Like A Prayer</i></b> 1989 Sire with Madonna
Love Song	
<b>Brownmark</b>	<b><i>Good Feeling</i></b> 1989 Motown
Shall We Dance	
<b>Patti LaBelle</b>	<b><i>Be Yourself</i></b> 1989 MCA with Sheena Easton
Love 89 Yo Mister	
<b>Mavis Staples</b>	<b><i>Time Waits For No One</i></b> 1989 Paisley Park
Come Home I Guess I'm Crazy Interesting Jaguar Time Waits For No One Train	with Mavis Staples
<b>Kahoru Kohiruimaki</b>	<b><i>Time The Motion</i></b> 1989 TDK with Levi Seacer Jr. with Levi Seacer Jr.
Bliss Mind Bells	
<b>Kid Creole And The Coconuts</b>	<b><i>Private Waters In The Great Divide</i></b> 1990 CBS
The Sex Of It	
<b>Elisa Fiorillo</b>	<b><i>I Am</i></b> 1990 Chrysalis with David Z, Levi Seacer Jr. with David Z, Levi Seacer Jr., Elisa Fiorillo
I Am Love's No Fun On The Way Up Ooh This I Need Playgirl	



<b>The Time</b>	<b><i>Pandemonium</i></b> 1990 Paisley Park
Chocolate Data Bank Donald Trump (Black Version) Jerk Out My Summertime Thang	with Morris Day, Jimmy Jam, Terry Lewis

<b>Prince</b>	<b><i>Graffiti Bridge</i></b> 1990 Paisley Park
Love Machine performed by The Time, co-lead voice by Elisa Fiorillo Melody Cool lead voice by Mavis Staples Release It performed by The Time Round And Round lead voice by Tevin Campbell Shake! performed by The Time The Latest Fashion performed by The Time with Prince	with Morris Day, Levi Seacer Jr. with Morris Day, Levi Seacer Jr. with Morris Day

<b>Prince</b>	<b>"New Power Generation" maxi-single B-sides</b> 1990 Paisley Park with Tony Mosley T.C.'s Rap performed by T.C. Ellis with T.C. Ellis
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<b>Mica Paris</b>	<b><i>Contribution</i></b> 1990 Island
If I Love U 2 Nite	

<b>Eric Leeds</b>	<b><i>Times Squared</i></b> 1991 Paisley Park
Andorra Cape Horn The Dopamine Rush Easy Does It Little Rock Night Owl Once Upon A Time Overnight, Every Night Times Squared	with Eric Leeds, Levi Seacer Jr., Sheila E. with Eric Leeds with Eric Leeds with Eric Leeds, Levi Seacer Jr., Sheila E. with Eric Leeds with Eric Leeds, Levi Seacer Jr., Sheila E. with Eric Leeds

<b>Jevetta Steele</b>	<b><i>Here It Is</i></b> 1991 Une Musique/Musidisc [first edition] with David Z, Levi Seacer Jr. with Jevetta Steele, Levi Seacer Jr.
And How Skip 2 My U My Darlin'	

<b>Martika</b>	<b><i>Martika's Kitchen</i></b> 1991 Columbia with Martika with Martika Spirit with Levi Seacer Jr., Martika, Frankie Blue
Don't Say U Love Me Love... Thy Will Be Done Martika's Kitchen Spirit	





**Paula Abdul** *Spellbound*  
1991 Virgin

U

**T.C. Ellis** *True Confessions*  
1991 Paisley Park

Bambi (Rap)  
Girl O' My Dreams  
Miss Thang

**Patti LaBelle** *Burnin'*  
1991 MCA

I Hear Your Voice with Rosie Gaines, Francis Jules

**Joe Cocker** *Night Calls*  
1991 Capitol

Five Women

**Ingrid Chavez** *May 19 1992*  
1991 Paisley Park

Elephant Box with Ingrid Chavez  
Heaven Must Be Near with Ingrid Chavez, Levi Seacer Jr.  
Jadestone with Ingrid Chavez  
Slappy Dappy with Ingrid Chavez  
Whispering Dandelions with Ingrid Chavez

**Celine Dion** *Celine Dion*  
1992 Columbia

With This Tear

**Lois Lane** *Precious*  
1992 Lana Lane

Qualified with Kirk Johnson

**El DeBarge** *In The Storm*  
1992 Warner Bros.

Tip O' My Tongue with Kirk Johnson

**Carmen Electra** *Carmen Electra*  
1993 Paisley Park

All That with Carmen Electra  
Everybody Get On Up with Monie Love, Carmen Electra  
Fantasia Erotica with Carmen Electra  
Fun with Carmen Electra  
Go Go Dancer with Carmen Electra, Tony Mosley  
Just A Little Lovin' with Tony Mosley  
Step To The Mic with Monie Love, Levi Seacer Jr.

**Candy Dulfer** *Sax-A-Go-Go*  
1993 BMG Ariola

Sunday Afternoon

**Howard Hewett** *Allegiance*  
1993 Elektra

Allegiance

**Eric Leeds** *Things Left Unsaid*  
1993 Paisley Park

Aguadilla with Eric Leeds

**Monie Love** *In A Word Or 2*  
1993 Cooltempo

Born 2 B.R.E.E.D. with Monie Love, Levi Seacer Jr.  
In A Word Or 2 with Monie Love

**Mavis Staples**

*The Voice*  
1993 Paisley Park

A Man Called Jesus  
Blood Is Thicker Than Mine  
House In Order  
The Undertaker

with Tommy Barbarella, Michael Bland,  
Levi Seacer Jr., Sonny Thompson  
with Rosie Gaines, Francis Jules

The Voice  
You Will Be Moved

**The Steeles** *Heaven Help Us All*  
1993 Elektra/None Such

Well Done

**Jevetta Steele** *Here It Is*  
1993 Columbia [second edition]

Hold Me  
Open Book with Levi Seacer Jr., Martika

**Earth, Wind & Fire** *Millennium*  
1993 Reprise

Super Hero

**George Clinton** *Hey Man... Smell My Finger*  
1993 Paisley Park

The Big Pump with George Clinton

**Louie Louie** *Let's Get Started*  
1993 Reprise

Dance Unto The Rhythm with Michael Koppelman  
Get Blue with Levi Seacer Jr.

**Tevin Campbell** *I'm Ready*  
1993 Qwest/Warner Bros

Paris 1798430  
Shhh  
The Halls Of Desire  
Uncle Sam with Paula Sherfield

**Various artists** *1-800-NEW-FUNK*  
1994 N.P.G. Records

Minneapolis with Sonny Thompson

performed by MPLS

Love Sign  
performed by  and Nona Gaye

Color  
performed by The Steeles

Standing At The Altar  
performed by Margie Cox

2gether  
performed by The N.P.G.

17  
performed by Madhouse

**Various artists** *Ready To Wear*  
Pret-A-Porter Motion Picture Soundtrack

Get Wild  
performed by The N.P.G.  
1994 Columbia  
with Sonny Thompson







*Standing At The Altar With*

# MARGIE COX

Described as “a woman with a lot of soul – on this planet or any other” in the liner notes to the *1-800-NEW-FUNK* album, Margie Cox has been active on the Minneapolis music scene for over 18 years, singing in Ta Mara and The Seen, MC Flash, and Dr. Mambo’s Combo, a group she formed in 1987 and which is still going strong. In this exclusive interview with *UPTOWN*, Margie talks about her fascinating musical career and her current single, “Standing At The Altar.”

**C**an you tell us something about your background and how you got into music?

My mother was a singer and a singing teacher and my father played piano, so I was surrounded by music when I grew up. I started my first band in 9th grade, The Free School Band. I went to a free school, where you got to pick your own classes and you didn't have to take all the courses. I mean, if you didn't want to take history you didn't have to take history. I took a lot of art and music.

I had hippie parents and they were into music. They liked The Beatles and Jimi Hendrix. I listened to their music as I grew up. My mom sang in a group called Consentis Musicus here in Minneapolis, and I went along to her rehearsals a lot of the time. I checked out how harmonies were done and things like that. So I was just sort of born into it.

**At what age did you start singing professionally?**

In 9th grade with my band. We played in a place called Bootlegger Sams in Dinky Town. I was about 14 years old, and we were like the house band there for about two nights a week. I received my first payment when I was 14 years old, and ever since I have been in bands, playing for money and supporting myself. I guess you can say I have been in the business since then.

I have sort of worked my way into better bands all the time. I got to know more musicians and did auditions for better bands and made a little more money.

I met Jesse Johnson [of The Time] when I was in my twenties. I was in the T.C. Jammers. He approached me to do the Ta Mara project. There were a couple of years when he and I were talking about his idea, and finally in 1984 we got together and signed the contract.

## TA MARA AND THE SEEN

**What can you tell us about your career with Ta Mara and The Seen?**

Ta Mara and The Seen did really well. Ta Mara and The Seen was really Ta Mara and Jesse, because it was Jesse who played all the instruments on the records. Whenever we did videos or shows we had to have a whole band, but they didn't really work on the recordings. We didn't tour.

We had one hit with "Everybody Dance," that was number one on the Black charts for two weeks in a row and number 19 on the Pop charts for a couple of weeks in a row. It stayed on the Pop radio for a couple of years, I'd hear it all the time. We didn't tour or make a video for the song, but we did do *American Bandstand* and *Solid Gold*. I don't know why we didn't make a video. Then we released "Affection," as a second single. It did well on the Black charts.

The second album was half produced by Jesse and the other half was produced by Dave Cochran out in California. His songs were OK, they were nice and that album did OK on the Black charts, but it didn't cross over, didn't make a Pop hit.

**When did Ta Mara and The Seen end?**

Very strangely in 1987. Jesse called me up one day, and said: "Well, they have dropped you, no more Ta Mara and The Seen on A & M." But he did say, "I'm trying to get another deal." By then I was playing with Dr. Mambo's Combo.

## DR. MAMBO'S COMBO

**How and when did Dr. Mambo's Combo start?**

Tim Emerson and I started in Dr. Mambo's Combo in about 1987. Tim had the name and we talked about what players we wanted in the band. We called them up and they showed up.

Bob Vandell was our drummer at first. He was with us for a year and a half. Then he quit and went to L.A. and Michael Bland joined the band and has been with us ever since. The band is mostly real session-type musicians that are hired to play on people's al-

bums. I guess Dr. Mambo's Combo is the hot session players of the Midwest. And they are all real good friends of mine, real good people.

Right now the band is Michael Bland (drums), Doug Nelson (bass), Steve Cherewan (keyboards), and Tim Emerson (rhythm guitar), who is the leader of the band. Then we have Billy Franzie on lead guitar and vocals. We also have Fred Steele [of The Steeles], myself and G. Sharp singing lead vocals, and that's about it.

Michael is in Prince's band, and he's out working on Paisley Park on Mondays and Tuesdays, but most of the time he is with us. Previously Cynthia Johnson [who sang Lipps Inc.'s huge hit "Funky Town"], Melanie Rosales, and Debbie Duncan sung with us. Debbie quit and released a jazz album, which is doing well.

**How did you hook up with Prince?**

I was playing with Dr. Mambo's Combo at the Fine Line and Prince was there. He had me come up and talk to him. He asked what I was doing, and I said, "Well, nothing." So I told Prince that I was ready to do something else. That night we went to Paisley Park. It was November of 1988. We recorded the "We Can Hang" that night and it went really well. We were so excited!

**Did you know Prince before this meeting and session?**

You see, in Minneapolis all the singers and musicians who have been working here all know each other. We've all seen Prince and met him at various gigs and recording sessions.

I had met Prince way back in the early 80's when I was singing backgrounds for Sue Ann Carwell. Sue Ann was another project of Prince's. She was on Warner Brothers, and I knew Prince back then. [Sue Ann Carwell's project with Prince was never completed.] He knew about me for a while, so when he finally approached me in 1988, I thought, "Yeah, finally! OK!"

**Do you have any recollections from the *Saturday Night Live* appearance in 1989 when you sang backing vocals for Prince on "Electric Chair"?**

Oh, that was just incredible! I met Steve Martin and people like that. It was one of the best days of my life.

**Did you rehearse a few songs to choose from or did you concentrate on "Electric Chair"?**

Oh no, we just kept rehearsing one song, the same one. Prince is really into rehearsing, getting one thing done to perfection.

**I think you were doing a number of Paisley Park sessions in 1989 including tracks Prince did for The Times' *Pandemonium* album. What can you tell us about this project and other sessions at Paisley Park?**

A lot of times Prince would just call me and say, "Hey, can you come in and help me out?" I'd just go in and sing a bunch of backgrounds. I sang on nearly all of the tracks for The Time's comeback album.

**You also sing vocals on "A Man Called Jesus", which emerged on Mavis Staples' *The Voice*, but which I believe Prince first intended for Cat.**

I didn't know who it was intended for. That was around the time I sang background vocals on "Yo Mister" for Patti LaBelle. In fact, that was the same day Patti LaBelle sang on one of my songs on my album, "Fire." She did a duet with me at the end of the song where we exchanged licks. I think that was the day I did "A Man Called Jesus."

## MC FLASH

**How did you become MC Flash?**

Prince and I thought of it. MC Flash was really Dr. Mambo's Com-



## DISCOGRAPHY

### *Ta Mara and The Seen*

#### ALBUMS

##### *Ta Mara and The Seen*

"Everybody Dance" / "Affection" / "Summertime Love" / "Lonely Heart" / "Thinking About You" / "Got To Have You" / "Long Cold Nights" / "Lonely Heart (Reprise)."

A & M, 1985.

##### *Blueberry Gossip*

"Blueberry Gossip" / "Excite My Life" / "Betch She Don't Want You" / "True Ecstasy" / "Captured By Your Soul" / "Tuff Girl" / "Everyday People" / "I Saved My Love" / "Gone In Love" / "Tears."

A & M, 1988

#### SINGLES

"Everybody Dance," A & M, 1985.

"Thinking About You," A & M, 1985.

On maxi-singles "Thinking About You [Long Version]."

"Affection," A & M, 1985.

On maxi-singles "Affection [Specially Remixed Version]" and non-album track "You Turn Me Up."

"Blueberry Gossip," A & M, 1988.

On maxi-singles "Blueberry Gossip [12" Vocal]," "Blueberry Gossip [Ta Mara's Groove]," "Blueberry Dub," "Blueberry Gossip [7" Single Version]," and "Blueberry Gossip [Radio Edit]."

### *Margie Cox*

#### SINGLE

"Standing At The Altar," N.P.G./Edel, 1994.

On CD singles "Standing At The Altar [Extended Version]."

Margie Cox sings on *Lipps Inc. Four* (Casablanca 1983), Brownmark's "Bang Bang" on *Good Feeling* (Motown 1989), The Time's *Pandemonium* (Reprise 1990), Mavis Staples' "A Man Called Jesus" on *The Voice* (Paisley Park 1993). She also sings uncredited on tracks on *Graffiti Bridge* (Paisley Park, 1990) and Patti LaBelle's "Yo Mister" on *Be Yourself* (MCA 1989).



bo with a different name. It was Michael Bland on drums, Doug Nelson on bass, Steve Cherewan on keyboards and Billy Franzie on guitar.

We put the band together in early 1990. Steve Cherewan sort of bowed out after a few months of rehearsals because he wants to play jazz. He has a lot of money so he doesn't have to gig. He is just waiting for his favourite gig to come along. So he said to me that he didn't really want to do this Flash-thing, so that's when we got Tommy Elm (Barbarella). Prince phoned Tommy. We knew him from The Steeles. Both Sonny Thompson and Tommy were in that band at the time. We got Tommy and Sonny and that was MC Flash, or just Flash. It went by both names.

I understand that MC Flash's recordings were placed on the shelf to be picked up at a later date. Is that correct?

That is right, I don't know why.

MC Flash opened for Prince at Rupert's and St. Paul Civic Center in 1990 when he previewed the *Nude* show. What can you tell us about that?

We only did five songs and they were all tied together. We played "Are You There?", "Brand New Boy," "Warden In The Prison Of Love," "We Can Hang," and "Curious Blue." It was just a short dynamo. We were also the houseband one night a week at the Glam Slam for four months in 1990. We did some covers but mostly the Flash tunes.

MC Flash was Mavis Staples' backing group when she opened some concerts on the *Nude* tour. Who were in the band at this point?

Yeah, the *Nude* tour. I was the background singer. It was me, Billy, Doug, Tommy, Michael and Sonny. The Flash band was Mavis' band and I was her background singer.

Any idea why MC Flash didn't get the job as opening act on the tour?

I don't know why we didn't get it. We started it up here in Minneapolis and in the two preview shows we were very well received. I think maybe because Mavis had already released her album. It was fun to listen to her and I got to know her.



You can see Margie Cox with Dr. Mamba's Combo live every Monday at Bunker's Music Bar and Grill in Minneapolis, located at 761 N. Washington Avenue (phone number 339-8188). Cover charge is only \$3. The band performs three sets, starting at 9:30 pm and ending at 1:00 am. Their set spans 25 years of funk covers mixed with the band's own compositions. At press time, Dr. Mamba's Combo was negotiating a deal to perform at the Fine Line (318 First Avenue N.) on Wednesdays.





## SOLO PROJECT

When did you cut "Standing At The Altar"?

"Standing At The Altar" was cut in the fall of 1991.

When and how did the MC Flash project turn into a Margie Cox project?

No specific reasons, just the fact that when I was talking to Prince at one point after "Standing At The Altar," I think we both agreed that maybe I would do best to be a solo act and not a band. I can't really remember when the switch was made, it kind of slowly went into it.

"Standing At The Altar" has been released by Edel Records in parts of Europe. Are there any plans for an album?

Yes, my manager is pushing very hard for a first quarter 1995 release of my album. We don't know what label. I don't know, this is really weird right now... The album has been completed for years.

Which tracks have you recorded for the album?

"Good Man," "Brand New Boy," "Warden In The Prison Of Love," "We Can Hang," "Curious Blue," "Goodbye," "Boys Will Be Boys," "Kenny," "Bed Of Roses," "Are You There?", and "Fire." I think most titles were recorded in 1989 and 1990.

I've heard a version of "Good Man" with a man singing. Was there more than one lead singer in MC Flash?

That's Billy Franzie. It was Prince's idea. It was his song and he got the idea "always have one other vocal on your album." I guess people do that, have a guest singer. It sounded like a pretty good idea to me because Billy was in the band and he could sing great and the tune turned out so well.

How are you promoting the song and possible album?

We have shot a video. I went to L.A. and shot parts of it, and then I shot the rest of it at Paisley Park. It was really fun. We shot out in the desert about 60 miles out of L.A. It was just a little chapel in the middle of nowhere. They had an organ in there, so I had a musician friend of mine who lives out there show up and be the keyboard



player for that. But I think on the recording it is really Morris Hayes in Prince's band.

Did Prince direct the video?

Prince had a lot to do with it.

You never perform "Standing At The Altar" live. Is there a reason for that?

Yes, there is one small reason. I guess it is a big reason. That is the big-time background vocals require layers and layers of background singers and I have no backing singers right now.

Are there plans to release "Standing At The Altar" in the USA as a single?

Yes, N.P.G. Records wants to release my single in America sometime after January 1st 1995.

*Interview conducted by NATHAN WRIGHT.*



# the UPTOWN survey

We get a lot of response from our readers, but we would like to know more about you and your favourite Prince<sup>®</sup> music and your opinion on various features in *UPTOWN*. Please fill in the form below (you can photocopy the questionnaire or write down your replies on a piece of paper). You don't have to fill in all questions. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

**We will randomly select three people whom will receive a two-year subscription to *UPTOWN* and one person whom will receive the "Love Sign" promo CD and Margie Cox's "Standing At The Altar" CD single, kindly given to us by Edel Scandinavia.** The results and winners will be presented in *UPTOWN* #20, the June 1995 issue.

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A1. ... officially released songs on album or singles by Prince<sup>®</sup>?


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A5. ... Prince<sup>®</sup> video clips?


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ii ... tour reports	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
iii ... discographies	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
iv ... articles on Prince <sup>®</sup> related artists	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
v ... news section	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
vi ... design and layout	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
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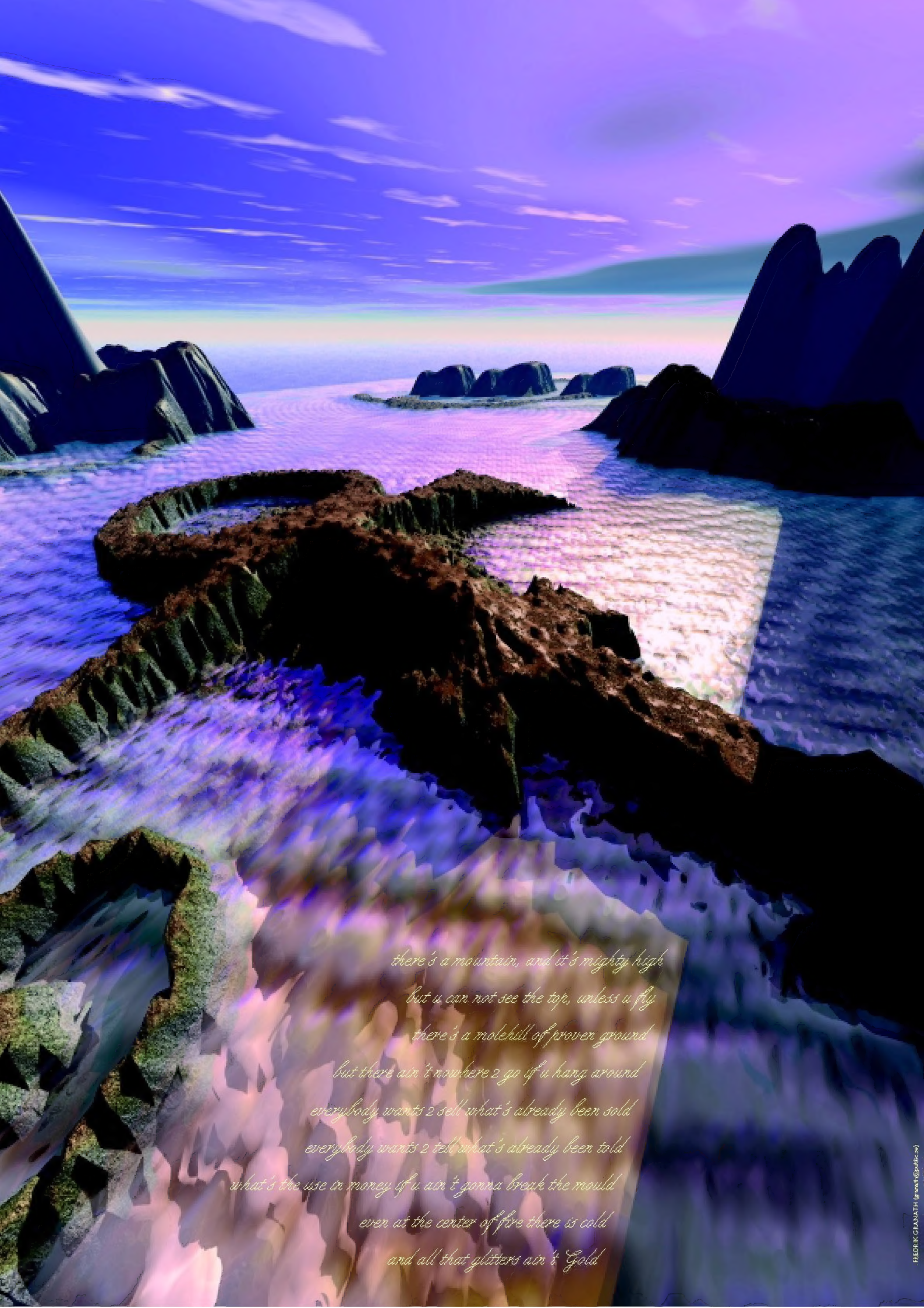
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